

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS LETTER

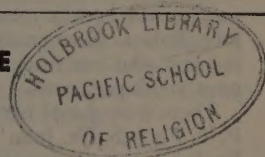
VOLUME V
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SPRING, 1958

THE MEANING OF OUR HERITAGE

PRESIDENT ARTHUR H. BRADFORD

The Annual Society Address



The Meaning of Our Heritage for me has been found and is found today in people whom I have known and people I now know. I want to introduce to you a few of these people who have helped build my heritage. They are a goodly company, beginning with my grandfather; after him, my father; then other ministers and lay people; some from this country and some from abroad; all of them known to me within the walls of Congregational parsonages. As I now present these people to you, I venture to give you a word of admonition from Bruce Catton's "The American Heritage of Great Historic Places." "You can, if you have the leisure, go to all the places which are touched on in this book; but what you will see when you get there depends in the last analysis on what you take with you. . . These places are as silent as the voices of the people who once gave them life. They will speak only to the visitor who is ready to listen; but if he permits them to speak, they do have the gift of tongues." So as we visit for a moment with these people in whom our heritage is found, what we receive from them will depend on what we have in our minds and hearts.

Here is Grandfather Benjamin Franklin Bradford. He began as a Wesleyan Methodist preacher, with a room in his parsonage as a station of the "underground railroad." In his later years he lived in Upper Montclair, New Jersey, while serving a nearby Congregational church, driving to his parish over a country road, now called Bradford Avenue. When Grandfather spoke at the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of his son's church in Montclair in 1895, he said: "Your Pastor has requested me to speak of some of the lessons I have learned during my fifty years' ministry. First of all, I have learned that life is a royal gift; but because of the grandeur of life men sometimes become blinded by a conceit of their own importance. I have become impressed with the fact that the world will exist after I am gone; and that Christ's kingdom will not pause in its progress if my views are not accepted and my methods not adopted. Twenty-five years from today few will know that I have ever lived; but I am thankful for life, for the way in which I have been led, for the privilege of doing my little in the great work." The words I want to emphasize are "The way in which I have been led."

My father, Amory Howe Bradford, served the First Congregational Church of Montclair from 1870 until his death in 1911. He and the church and the town grew to maturity together. Something of the meaning of our heritage is revealed, I believe, in the words of his "Civic Creed" which he wrote shortly before he died. "I believe that the place in which I live, while I live in it, should be regarded by me as the greatest place in the world; and that, as it gives to me the best which it has, it deserves from me the best that I can give to it. . . I believe that my duty to my city and to my country is as sacred as my duty to my family and to my Church and a part of my duty to my God. . . I believe that service of the Public is one test of true religion, and that the right use of the ballot is a Sacrament as holy as the Supper of the Lord."

Now let us turn to a few of the guests of my boyhood parsonage home in Montclair, who helped me to find the meaning of my heritage.

Here, with his long white beard, is Lyman Abbott, looking somewhat like one of the ancient Prophets but completely modern in his thought.

Frederick Douglass was an honored guest in our home. He, outstanding leader of his people, had been a runaway slave, a friend of John Brown. How gracious was his greeting to the boy who was instantly comfortable in this great man's presence!

There were guests from overseas, such as Dr. P. T. Forsyth, Dr. John Watson, and Principal Fairbairn.

Fairbairn, Principal of Mansfield College, was a distinguished theologian. Father admired him for his fine, analytical mind. His great book, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, was rich in the true meaning of our heritage.

Dr. Forsyth's Lyman Beecher Lectures, entitled *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*, delivered in 1907, are surprisingly relevant for today. They are indeed a part of our inheritance.

John Watson, better known as Ian Maclaren, author of the *Bonnie Briar Bush*, a Presbyterian, was one of those of other faiths who have helped me find the real meaning of our heritage.

One more guest I would call to mind at this time. I want you to see him standing in my father's pulpit on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the organization of the church and the beginning of father's pastorate: Washington Gladden, prophet of Social Action, trusted leader of our Congregational fellowship. His text that day was: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Much of the meaning of our heritage is found in that good, brave man, Washington Gladden, preaching from that great text, in that Montclair pulpit, forty-eight years ago.

As life has brought to me its varied and unexpected and, sometimes, bewildering experiences, these meanings gained in my youth have grown, and keep growing, in their significance. Moreover, I have continued to find these same meanings in people whom I have known and with whom I have been closely associated in my work as a parish minister, and in the common life and work of our churches. In these present days, after a full life among such people, I look out from the quiet of our New Hampshire home, in the Monadnock region, to the people who are now busily engaged in the active life of our Congregational Christian fellowship.

Written documents may give some interpretation to our inheritance, but it is in the lives of people that our true and living heritage may be found. For Our Heritage is a Way of Life, received and carried on and given to others, by adventuring men and women who cherish their

freedom in the bonds not of the Letter, but of the Spirit.

The Way leads forward through everything in the blessed company of those who have been and who are confident that God has and always will have "more Truth to break forth out of his holy word."

Graduate Students in History

Dr. Richard B. Drake, Professor of History at Berea College, who holds a Ph.D., with this thesis *Twenty-Five Years of American Missionary Association History*, has suggested that if we had a list of the postgraduates working in the field of interest they might be able to help one another, for often a research student will discover records and other excellent material which is not in his field but would be priceless to some other student. He comments on the fact that of all the major denominations our church records are scattered far and wide without any general records of where both general and particular records may be found. Dr. Drake has asked us to study this proposal and if possible to plan a thoroughgoing classification of sources of major items. To this end we would be greatly pleased to have the names and addresses of students now working in this field, and also of those who have in recent years completed theses on subjects dealing with or related to our history. Please send name and address to F. L. Fagley, 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

The "Old First" Again

A year ago we had a note concerning the observance of "Our Forefathers" Day by the Old First of Springfield, Mass., on its own birthday. Each year some phase of church life is stressed and this year the one hundred fortieth anniversary of the Church School, organized in 1818, will be stressed.

At first the school was kept going only in warm weather for there was no heating of the church until later. They held two sessions, one in morning and one in afternoon. The school course consisted in memorizing verses of the Bible, hymns and the catechism, and at the end of the season each child received a certificate as to the number of verses memorized. Some of these old certificates are prized heirlooms. The memorial service will feature a class recitation provided by a class of today on the early pattern and other items of great interest.

An Interesting Anniversary

"The First Congregational Church of Norwich Hill, Huntington, Mass., has since 1941 kept a live reminder of our church's anniversary in the form of a large single 1¼-inch candle which is lighted each service. It is placed in

front of our altar, bears a card showing the year of our church life . . . now 180.

"On Sunday, July 27, the service nearest the founding date, July 28, we shall choose from our congregation four persons who have done outstanding service through the years to transfer the light from the 180th candle to the 181st or candle. One person reads appropriate Scripture, a second lights a taper from the old candle and hands it to the third person who lights the new candle. The fourth person reads a service of dedication with responses by the audience. This is followed by a pastoral prayer.

"This simple but impressive service has become very meaningful, and is given rather generous local notice by the press. We like very much this reminder in living light of the service rendered by faithful souls here since 178."

ALVA J. RHINES

The State Historical Society and Church Records

The Congregational Conference of Minnesota recently entered into an agreement with the Minnesota Historical Society whereby the conference records are deposited in the manuscript collections of the society. Under this arrangement the records will be stored safely and yet be available readily for historical research.

The Minnesota Historical Society organized in 1849 is the oldest charter institution in the state. In St. Paul the society possesses a spacious proof building which houses its library, museum, manuscript and picture collections. Through the years many Congregationalists have been active in the work of the society. The library and manuscript collections contain rich sources for the study of Congregational history. The papers of missionaries and clergy, the records of local churches, and the documents of interdenominational organizations are to be found here. A number of other religious denominations have deposited papers in the society's manuscript collections also.

Where the state historical society has a record of permanence, trained personnel, and adequate storage facilities, it should be given serious consideration as a possible depository of church records. The local church historian is able to do a better job if he has access to research material in his own region.

Where state historical societies exhibit an interest in developing collections of research materials relating to religious organizations, it may be possible to develop regional research centers which will stimulate more local church historians to do work of scholarly quality. With the widespread use of microfilm it is now possible to enrich regional collections and to give the local historians of the diaspora access to materials which were unavailable formerly.

ARVEL M. STEECE, Ashland, Wisconsin

Congratulations

We salute our sister society of the Disciples of Christ who are rejoicing in the completion of their million-dollar headquarters building for the Disciples Historical Society. The building is the gift of the B. D. Phillips family of western Pennsylvania and is located adjoining the campus of the University of Tennessee. The addresses at the dedication will be given by Dr. L. G. Derthick, U. S. Commissioner of Education, a life-long member of the Disciples, and Dr. Lin D. Cartwright, Editor *Christian Evangelist* and President of the Society.

An Historical Covenant

The Congregational Church at Oroville, Cal., Rev. Fred Morrow, minister, recently celebrated its 100th anniversary. A hundred years ago Rev. Bela Seymour came as pastor to this "wickedest place in California." His covenant was the spiritual foundation of the church.

The Covenant:

I covenant with God and his people to follow Christ as he enables me in courage and love, and I bind myself to those who share this discipleship. I take this church to be my church. I undertake to think, pray and live fraternally within this household of faith, that we may seek together its peace, purity and increase. I intend, God helping me, to attend faithfully to its worship and sacraments, to share in my due portion of its work, support and benevolence, and to honor it among men by the uprightness, sincerity and unselfishness of my living.

Quotes from some letters concerning News Letter

The *News Letter* for Winter 1958 is a most excellent one; thank you for it. I wonder whether it is possible to secure copies of the *News Letters*, as they appear, for use as fillers for our Church Newsbulletin. Washington.

Our pastor has asked me to write for additional copies for our Church Council members of your *News Letter*. It would be very good if we could have twelve additional copies of future editions sent with the Minister's copy. Connecticut.

I enjoyed your *News Letter* more than I can possibly tell you. It seems to me that in a short space you put together historical records and statements which the lay members of the Church forget, and in some instances perhaps never knew of. I wish it could go to every citizen in the country. Ohio.

At a meeting of the Friendship League of our church, someone presented a copy of the *News Letter*. We would like to receive it as it has much information which would be helpful in furthering the work of our church. Florida.

Society Affairs—The Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the C. C. H. S. was held at the Broadway Congregational Church, New York, April 21st. Fifty-four persons were present. The luncheon was served by the staff of the church and the arrangements were made by these efficient workers, especially Dr. Penner and Mrs. Nisley, the minister's secretary.

At the luncheon, Dr. Henry Smith Leiper introduced Dr. Bradford as guest speaker, who delivered the annual historical lecture on the theme "The Meaning of Our Heritage." A portion of this address is published in this issue.

After a brief recess the President called the Society into business session and at his request Dr. Penner, chairman of the Society's Executive Committee, presided; Miss Lucy Eldredge, recording secretary. The business of the Society was efficiently handled (full minutes may be had on request) and there was an excellent response on the part of the members of the Society.

Mr. Lightbourne presented the Treasurer's report and this report was circulated to those present. It showed 1957 receipts, \$8,487.19 and 1957 disbursements of \$7,236.07, with a bank balance for the year of \$1,251.12 and all bills paid. This report had been examined by Arthur R. Paine, Auditor, February 19, 1958, and found correct.

The Society welcomed two visitors from the Evangelical and Reformed Church, Dr. Herbert B. Anstaett and Dr. David Dunn. Dr. Dunn responded with a few remarks regarding the work of the Historical Society of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, and invited our Society to be represented at the annual meeting of their Society, to be held at Lancaster Seminary, June 3rd. At this meeting, Dr. Carl E. Schneider will interpret, after some years of study in Europe, the European heritage of the Evangelical and Reformed and the Congregational Christian Churches. Copies of the first issue of

The Reporter, a bulletin of the Historical Society of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, were distributed.

Mr. Fagley gave the report of the Secretary, a summary of which had been printed in the last issue of the News Letter of the Society, adding comments regarding interesting letters that had been received in the office; of the healthy growth of the Society; increases in office costs, and encouraging response in receipts. He expressed special appreciation to Mr. John A. Harrer for his help in gathering historical data and the services of the Boston Library.

The Budget Committee presented the following budget for 1958, which after discussion was adopted.

Anticipated Expenses

| | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Rent | \$ 837.00 |
| Tel. & Tel. | 50.00 |
| Office Expense | 913.00 |
| Annual Meeting | 300.00 |
| Executive Committee | 125.00 |
| Printing | 645.00 |
| Contingencies | 100.00 |
| Salaries—Secy. Asst. | 2,400.00 |
| Secretary | 1,600.00 |
| Internal Revenue | 530.00 |
| | <hr/> \$7,500.00 |

Sources of Expected Income

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| The General Council | \$2,000.00 |
| The American Board | 500.00 |
| The Board of Home Missions | 750.00 |
| The Conferences | 1,500.00 |
| The Churches | 1,900.00 |
| Individuals | 800.00 |
| Seminaries | 50.00 |
| | <hr/> \$7,500.00 |

On recommendation of the Nominating Committee the officers were elected as follows:

President: Arthur H. Bradford, N. H.
Vice Presidents: Roland H. Bainton, Conn.
 Seminary Courses
 Helen Kenyon, Conn.
 Public Relations
Treasurer: James H. Lightbourne, R. I.
Librarian: John A. Harrer, Mass.
Secretary: Frederick L. Fagley, N. Y.

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Arthur H. Bradford James H. Lightbourne Frederick L. Fagley
 President Treasurer Secretary

Room 56, 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

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THE SUMMER NEWS LETTER
THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ORGANIZED OCTOBER 15, 1952

FREDERICK L. FAGLEY, SECRETARY
ROOM 56, 289 FOURTH AVENUE
NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Mrs. Leslie R. Rounds
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Joseph H. Stein
Alfred Grant Walton

September, 1958

To the Friends of the
Congregational Christian Historical Society

Greetings!

You have had a summary of the work of the Society for 1957 in the Spring News Letter. That was a looking back and we are sure all friends of the Society felt a sense of satisfaction with the work which had been carried forward with increasing efficiency, all bills paid and a small balance. Now as we view the future we are concerned that this program is alive, fitted to our present needs and future responsibilities.

The first concern is the condition of our national historical records. Few weeks go by that we do not learn of new collections. There are great collections at Yale and Harvard, University of Chicago, Fisk University, and Congregational libraries. Increasingly scholars in secular and religious fields consult us. As we gain wider knowledge we find splendid State Conference collections, most of them collected a century or more ago; many prize collections in old church libraries. These old historical treasures should be catalogued.

The first step toward putting our records in order is the recruiting and training of our local church historians. We have increased the number of enrolled historians from fewer than 50 to more than 1100. We hope to organize them on a state basis, with an annual meeting and a worthwhile program.

The regular program goes forward, assisting church workers to find information for their needs, putting at the disposal of our pastors material for their use and undergirding our whole fellowship.

We must remember that for the first 150 years of American history, from the New England settlements to the Revolutionary War, the Congregational churches were leaders in developing a type of church, school, community life which largely determined the American way of life. Tracing to the present time the growth of principles and actions that dominated these early years, is a broadly creative study. The wide flood of magnificent new books in the field of historic research evidences a new interest in our history. It is the aim of our Society to add worthy contribution. Dr. Nathaniel Micklen in his book, Ultimate Questions, says, "Our statesmen have to deal with an international situation that is full of danger, uncertainty, and menace. They must, as best they can, defend and vindicate the spiritual values of the West, and we Christians...must play our part in the political field according to such wisdom as may be given to us."

What are our financial needs? If costs would remain steady, there would be no need to request additional help. Our postage, rent, printing, are all up. Our national Boards continue their support, also the Conferences, Churches and individuals. We shall need \$7,500 for our expenses for 1958. We do hope for renewal of our present contributions and for many more new members. Kindly give us your support.

Fraternally yours,

The Budget and Finance Committee:

Albert J. Penner, Chairman James H. Lightbourne Arthur H. Bradford
Helen Kenyon Ross Cannon Frederick L. Fagley

P.S. The above letter was composed by Dr. Fagley and circulated among the members of the Budget and Finance Committee. On August 25th death stilled his voice and pen, but the work of our Society so dear to his heart will surely go on to serve our fellowship. A.J.P.